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STANDARD FORM NO. 64

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

DATE: 1 April 1959

TO : Chief, FBIS

FROM : Chief, Mediterranean Bureau

SUBJECT: FBIS-BBC Coverage Coordination Meeting

1. When [] was in Caversham in February for the semi-annual coverage coordination meeting, he attended a special unofficial conference besides having numerous consultations. Since it was understood that a report would be made from London, particularly on the conference, this bureau limited its reporting to forwarding of the official minutes of the meeting and to inclusion of a paragraph in the February Progress Report. par- 25X1

2. The Bureau, however, has recently learned that it had been expected to submit the only reports. They have now been prepared and are forwarded for your information. The delay is regretted.

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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Chief Mediterranean Bureau

DATE: 25 February 1959

FROM : Chief Monitor Mediterranean Bureau
Ref : My Memorandum dated 26 February 1959
Subject: FBIS-BBC Coverage Coordination Meeting
SUBJECT: Supplemental Report on 18 February Informal Meeting
Convened by Mr. Campbell

1. A detailed report on the subject meeting is given below for the following reasons:

a. Such an informal session, convened by the head of one service for the apparent purpose of insuring that the representative of the other service accept a single agenda point, was unique in my experience of five coordination meetings.

b. At least one subject of a "classified" nature was discussed at this session.

Background

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[] told me he believed that the meeting was called as a result of a conversation he had had with Mr. Sheringham a day or two before my arrival in Caversham. In essence, this conversation dealt with the question of coverage of Cairo Home Service. Mr. Sheringham put forward the BBC's position in this matter, namely that it most strongly advocated, and in fact was ready to insist upon, continuation of the present split coverage arrangement. This was based largely on BBC's desire to have the fastest possible handling of material from this station of such vital interest to the British Government, and further on BBC's desire to utilize its eight-man Arabic section on as much priority one material as possible.

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[] gathered from this conversation that BBC was distinctly worried that Medbureau's representative might be coming to the meeting with a brief to fight strenuously for the return of all Cairo Home Service coverage to FBIS. As this specific point had not been mentioned in pre-meeting exchanges between BBC and Medbureau on agenda matters, Mr. [] had no way of knowing that the present Cairo coverage arrangement had proved to be of considerable value to Medbureau by giving its Arabic section a welcome degree of flexibility enabling expansion of coverage in other directions, and that therefore Medbureau had no intention of pressing BBC on this matter.

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Dur position was--and remains--that, whereas there were certain obvious advantages in unilateral coverage, existing liaison arrangements with BBC were working smoothly, and that we were quite willing to drop our earlier request for the return of all Cairo Home Service coverage when our staffing position would permit it.

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In his discussion with [] Mr. Sheringham indicated that BBC believed that the final decision in this matter would have to be made in Washington. Mr. [] told him that, on the contrary, when practicable decisions on most coverage matters are made in the field, that FBIS Headquarters is guided by the advice of the bureaus concerned. It was this point, apparently, which led to the extraordinary meeting on 18 February. Not knowing that Medbureau's representative did not intend to demand the return of Cairo Home Service coverage, Mr. Campbell apparently thought that in order to make BBC's point stick, considerable pressure might have to be brought on Medbureau's representative to convince him that BBC was going to insist on maintaining the status quo.

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Admittedly this line of reasoning as regards the origins of the extraordinary meeting is in the realm of conjecture, but the fact remains that it was called very soon after [] and Mr. Sheringham had discussed the matter and only one day before my arrival in Caversham.

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The Meeting

The meeting was attended by Mr. Campbell, Mr. Addington, Mr. Rubinstein, Mr. Sheringham, [] and myself. After to opening amenities, Mr. Campbell went directly into the main topic, explaining forcefully and in some detail the reasons for BBC's interest in retaining evening coverage of Cairo Home Service, and finally asking Medbureau's views on the matter. As noted above, I replied that while the Bureau had been anxious to resume this coverage when its staffing position made this possible, we now felt that the advantages accruing to us in the way of increased flexibility for both routine and emergency coverage clearly outweighed the benefits of coverage continuity, and that therefore we had no objection to the continuation of the present division of labor.

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I had the distinct impression that after this statement, Mr. Campbell and his associates visibly relaxed, even brightened, and I felt that perhaps the meeting might end at that point. As it happened, however, a general discussion began of Arabic coverage problems, staffing potentials, and so forth, which in turn gave way to a discussion of the problem of Satellite Arabic coverage. It was in this connection that Mr. Campbell first mentioned BBC's intention to hire three additional Arabic monitors, the necessary authority having been received recently on the condition that this added monitor strength would be used to expand BBC's coverage of North African transmitters. I am afraid that my amazement at this revelation was ill-concealed as I could not see how three additional Arabic monitors could thus be employed full time.

In response to my question as to which coverage areas BBC had in mind, Mr. Campbell mentioned Libya, Morocco, and Algiers, but at that point was respectfully interrupted by Mr. Sheringham who pointed out that actually Algiers should not be included as it is, of course, French controlled and the radio is being covered quite adequately at present. Sheringham added that BBC's clients are very much interested in getting greater coverage of San'a and Mecca and that perhaps if these stations increase power as expected BBC might be able to help out in that regard.

On this somewhat confusing note the discussion returned to the subject of Satellite Arabic coverage, the point being reiterated that while BBC was in fact about to increase its staff, it could not possibly increase Satellite coverage beyond the present level because the new monitoring personnel were "spoken for".

A general discussion on African coverage then developed. In this connection Mr. Campbell mentioned that fact that BBC's plans for an East African monitoring station were well advanced, that the project for a full-scale operation in Nairobi complete with teletype communication with London was indeed well out of the planning stage. He said that this information was still off the record and that the actual timetable for activation of the operation had not been fixed, but that as far as BBC was concerned it was a sure thing. He said they planned to concentrate on monitoring African dialect broadcasts, utilizing locally recruited monitors. Mr. Sheringham added that some Arabic monitoring would certainly be done, Omdurman reception being excellent and San'a, fair. Both Mr. Sheringham and Mr. Campbell emphasized that BBC had no intention of cutting in on traditional FBIS areas of Arabic coverage, that any overlapping coverage would be of a supplementary nature.

2. I left the meeting with mixed feelings. Mr. Campbell's remarks about the East African monitoring station had indeed been a revelation, as up to that time I had only been vaguely aware that the project was under consideration. At the same time, I left the meeting still uncertain about the tasks to be assigned to the three new Arabic monitors. Mr. Sheringham had mentioned that in addition to North African coverage they might also tackle Mecca and San'a. Later he noted that reception of San'a was reasonably good in Nairobi and that it might be monitored there. The three new Arabs, it was stated, are definitely slated for Caversham; Nairobi monitors will be recruited in East Africa.

My puzzlement over this matter was compounded when, later the same day, in a private conversation with Mr. Brehm, I asked how he was getting along with recruiting for the three new Arabic slots, he expressed utter amazement, disclaiming any knowledge of any BBC plans to expand its Arabic staff. He did say, however, that he had that very day been testing African dialect candidates in Caversham.

That the BBC definitely intends to hire three additional Arabs is unquestioned, as this point was minuted at the formal session of the coordination meeting at BBC's request. As to how these additional monitors will be utilized there is considerable uncertainty. That the BBC's Senior Assistant in charge of recruiting appeared to know nothing about the planned expansion, strange as this might be, probably resulted in some way from confusion in the timing of the announcement.

3. As the meeting on 18 February was "informal" and in part, at Mr. Campbell's request, "off the record," no notes were taken during the session. The description of the meeting given above is based on my personal recollections and notes made afterward.



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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Chief Mediterranean Bureau

FROM : Chief Monitor Mediterranean Bureau

SUBJECT: FBIS-BBC Coverage Coordination Meeting

DATE: 26 February 1959

1. From 17 through 19 February I visited Caversham as the Mediterranean Bureau's representative at the Twelfth Biannual FBIS-BBC Coverage Coordination Meeting. Unfortunately, due to weather complications I was unable to reach Caversham before late evening on 17 February and therefore had only one day for informal discussions with FBIS and BBC officials before the formal meeting on 19 February. STAT
2. During the day of the 18th and the following afternoon I did, however, have a chance to talk with many officials and staff members including Mr. Campbell, Head of the Monitoring Service; Mr. Addington, Head of the Reception Unit; Mr. Landon, Head of the News Bureau; Mr. Rubinstein, Senior Assistant I, Coverage; Mr. Brehm, Senior Assistant II, Personnel; Mr. Sheringham, Chief Report Writer; and Mr. Cox, Chief Middle East Report Writer.
3. On 18 February [redacted] and I, together with those BBC officials named above, with the exception of Mr. Brehm and Mr. Cox, attended an informal meeting arranged by Mr. Campbell. The general topic for discussion at this meeting was Arabic coverage and specifically coverage of Cairo radio and Satellite Arabic broadcasts. After a review of our joint Arabic monitoring efforts, it was agreed present coverage arrangements are generally satisfactory. It was further agreed that the present division of coverage of Cairo radio is working well and that both BBC and FBIS are satisfied to maintain the status quo. As regards Satellite Arabic coverage, BBC stated that while it is unable to expand its present efforts, it realizes FBIS' interest in this coverage and will keep our requirements in mind in future planning. Mr. Campbell noted that BBC has recently been authorized to hire three Arabic monitors in addition to the eight already on duty, but that this increase in staff is to be utilized specifically for increasing BBC's coverage of North African Arabic broadcasts. All of these points were later included in the minutes of the formal meeting.

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4. Mr. Addington, Mr. Rubinstein, [redacted] and myself were present at the formal session of the Twelfth Biannual FBIS-BBC Coverage Coordination Meeting held on 19 February. In addition to the points mentioned in the paragraph above, the formal session considered other Arabic coverage matters, Greek and Russian coverage, and personnel matters of mutual interest. Both sides expressed complete satisfaction with the excellent spirit of cooperation prevailing between Kyrenia and Caversham. STAT

5. [redacted] and Mr. Campbell entertained me at luncheons on 18 and 19 February.

6. I should like to note in conclusion that the advice and assistance of [redacted] based on his intimate knowledge of BBC operations and close personal association with BBC officials and staff members, contributed significantly to the success of my visit.

[redacted]

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INFORMAL MEMORANDUM

26 February 1959

To : Chief Editor
From : Chief Monitor
Subject: Notes on Caversham Sessions

1. Below are some notes and comments on my visit to Caversham last week for the biannual coverage coordination meeting. Most of this material was gleaned from private conversations with various BBC Monitoring Service officials, and for the sake of convenience I have broken it down by departments in this report. Attached are the minutes of the official session of the coverage coordination meeting.

Landon (News Bureau)

Landon had really very little to offer in the way of constructive advice or criticism. He began our conversation by noting with pleasure that in recent weeks there had been a general improvement in the speed with which items of marginal importance were getting to him. Landon agreed, as in the past, that important items virtually always get to the News Bureau quickly and in good form and in general there is no complaint on this score. He did, of course, deplore the odd occasional incident, such as the recent Qasim thing, but agreed that they were extremely rare. I stood firm on our explanation of that particular incident and he accepted it, but apparently he could not resist the opportunity to grumble a bit.

Like all other BBC officials contacted during the visit, Landon had nothing but praise for the general conduct of our operation.

Landon did mention one or two points which we might well examine. For one, he is still concerned about the wire being cluttered up with possibly unimportant items originating in Caversham, such as round-ups and other routine traffic. He asked, for example, if we would mind getting the BBC coverage changes report by airmail rather than by wire. I told him we would welcome this in that --as you have probably noticed--this nine-column tabulation job arrives here via Cable and Wireless Morse as absolute hash. He also asked about the Soviet round-up. I told him we would study this one again.

Landon again mentioned the sub-marginal ANA material, that elusive 30 percent of the part of the file we do not take, which he strongly maintained was still of great interest to BBC external department people. He would like to get it from us, but he realized that we do have to draw the line somewhere. In this connection he mentioned the fact that in the near future BBC plans to have some kind of a liaison man with immediate access to ANA material at the source, that is, Beirut, who will file a daily round-up of sub-marginal stuff to BBC external service and do special feature pieces as well. There are, of course, interesting implications in this development for us, but Landon seemed reluctant to go into much detail probably because the project might still be in the cooking stage.

Sheringham/Cox (Editorial)

Unfortunately, Sheringham was laid low by the flu before I had a chance to have more than a five-minute hallway conversation with him. I did, however, have a long session with his right-hand man and editor of Summary Part IV, Cox, who had a number of concrete points to make.

The first thing of interest is the fact that Part IV, and in fact all parts of the Summary, are switching over to daily publication in the near future. This may have considerable implications for our operation, since, for the first time in recent history, we will be faced with BBC editorial section concerning itself with daily deadlines. Cox was unable to give me any details on the timing of the project change over, but seemed to think it would take place within the next couple of months.

For the present, Cox is mainly concerned over the volume of copy he gets from us and certain aspects of our processing of requested materials. Basically he wants more of everything. His consumers have gargantuan appetites for detailed coverage of any Arabic broadcast which could in any way be construed as touching on British interests. While realizing the dissimilarities between our two editorial operations, Cox said he would really like to have such material treated as excerpts at the very least. I told him that to set such an editorial selection standard would be impractical for us, but that in this matter, as in all others, we will continue to keep his requirements in mind.

Cox raised other specific points regarding the Baghdad trials reportage and our Voice of Arabs backstopp coverage.

Regarding the trials, he would like to have more testimony and less editorial report. I sympathized with him, but pointed out that this coverage in its present form represents a considerable burden on our Arabic section, that fuller treatment would be almost impossible. He understood. He asked if we could please indicate the length of each trial session. I assumed him we would henceforth include this information.

Another point of particular interest to Cox is our handling of material processed in response to BBC requests covering inaudible portions of Voice of Arabs. He formulated his needs this way: Whenever we are asked to do a portion of the Voice of Arabs, and the items in question deal with matters of immediate British interest -- oil, Kuwait, Persian Gulf area, Aden, British policy in the area -- BBC editorial would like to have at least excerpts. He said that very often times of this kind which we FYI and label no further processing sound extremely enticing, but that he ~~was~~ hesitates to press us for fuller treatment --knowing how busy we are--and makes do with our FYI. As noted before, I told him that we would keep this requirement in mind, but could not, of course, commit us to a fixed policy in this regard. He also mentioned the long article which usually follows the Voice of Arabs press review at 1845 which we are sometimes asked to process. BBC considers this to be a key propaganda piece and would like to have the fullest possible processing of it. I took note of this request and agreed to pass it on to Medbureau editorial without prejudice.

Cox said that the Middle East round-up was proving more and more useful and he would like to get it earlier if possible. I told him that we were working on the timing of this product and that filing time would probably be advanced in the near future. He was pleased.

Cox shared our concern over our present inability to monitor Kurdish broadcasts from Middle East transmitters and would like very much to get any table scraps we might pick up from Tel-Aviv and Ankara, both of which countries monitor these Kurdish broadcasts and occasionally mention items from Baghdad or Cairo. As I recall we have picked up one or two of these from Tel-Aviv, but none from Ankara. Latter seems rather unlikely to me, but we might keep an eye out for something of the kind.

Cox seemed to think that occasionally our Arabic monitors, in attempting to render a foreign name phonetically, pick out of thin air a known English or French name, type it out and label it phonetic rather than giving an actual phonetic rendering. A minor point he admitted, but had mentioned it largely because he had recently spent the better part of one morning trying to check out such a name, in this case that of a British Member of Parliament.

A final point: Cox said that almost all Part IV consumers are "Arabists", fully familiar with the language. Because of this they often feel that we are "over translating", going to unnecessary lengths to translate certain words and expressions that would be perfectly familiar and certainly more accurate if left in the original. I replied that unfortunately few if any of our readers are Arabists, and that therefore we would have to go on translating fully. He understood this, but suggested that BBC would always be delighted to have the Arabic original as well for any words or phrases--or sentences for that matter--about which our monitors have any doubts as to precise translation.

Rubinstein (Coverage)

We discussed informally BBC coverage and monitoring personnel potential in Greek, Turkish, and Persian. BBC has only one working full-time Greek monitor, but three Russian monitors are also competent in Greek. Turkish T/O is also one, but two other Turks are now working as French monitors. As far as backstopping us is concerned, however, these extra Greeks and Turks are only available on a crash emergency basis. Athens and Ankara reception on short wave is good in the evenings. BBC offered to take over the 2200 GMT Athens show in place of the now unintelligible Voice of Truth. This will be studied. Teheran programs other than those beamed abroad are unmonitorable in Caversham.

We again went over familiar old ground concerning Russian regional coverage. BBC still believes that coverage should be assigned in blocks rather than the present "piecemeal" system, that is, decide who can best hear a given station and then assign coverage responsibility either to BBC or Medbureau. This idea remains theoretically good and practically unworkable. The main snag is reception. If this were a fixed factor we could undoubtedly do it BBC's way and probably to our mutual profit, but the fact of the matter is that reception varies from season to season and from year to year. So long as BBC maintains its ponderously slow push communications with its regional listening posts

and by mail to us, really successful coordination is impossible. We must therefore continue on the present basis of taking what we can get when we can get it, even though it means spreading ourselves thin.

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